



NAVAJO NATION HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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NNHRC Holds Public Hearing for Victims of Predatory Auto Sales Tactics

SAINT MICHAELS, Navajo Nation—The Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission held a public hearing during their regular commissioner's meeting last Friday with a turnout of over 100 Navajo citizens who experienced questionable tactics against them by border town auto dealers. Most were older Navajo citizens.

Exactly 26 people formally signed up to provide their testimony on December 7, 2012 at the Dilkon Chapter in Dilkon, Navajo Nation (AZ). A couple more people were allowed by Commissioners to give testimony. The actual amount of testimonies received is to be determined.



A couple of NNHRC staff member listen to Leonard Gorman's video presentation at the NNHRC public hearing about predatory auto sales tactics by border town dealerships on Dec. 7, 2012 at the Dilkon Chapter House on the Navajo Nation.

As for the over 100 people who signed-in, Navajo citizens shared addresses from Dilkon, Teec Nos Pos, Pinon, Ganado, Holbrook, Keams Canyon, Jeddito, Indian Wells, Window Rock, Many Farms, Flagstaff, Chinle, Winslow, Kayenta, Page, Tuba City, Leupp, Round Rock, Sanders, Blue Gap, Houck, Chambers, Smoke Signal, Vanderwagon, Wide Ruins, Prewitt, Shiprock, Shonto, Forest Lake, Gamerc, Gallup, Kirtland and even Kykotsmovi. Attorneys from DNA People Legal Service also attended the event.

“A lot of the information shared in people's testimony is appalling how Navajos are being mistreated,” said NNHRC Executive Director Leonard Gorman.

Prior to the hearing testimonies, Gorman explained to the Navajo audience the importance in filing a complaint with NNHRC if anyone felt they had been discriminated against. He also presented a survey urging Navajo people to fill it out anonymously. To take part in the survey, call NNHRC and a staff member will mail or e-mail it to you.

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Following Gorman's presentation, NNHRC Chairperson Steve Darden spoke and later NNHRC Attorney Calvin Lee presented a new informational guide on how and what to negotiate in purchasing a vehicle for getting a fair deal. It highlights sales tactics in presale, point of sale, and after leaving the dealer; a seven point check list before buying a vehicle; and a frequently asked questions section. To learn more, call the NNHRC.

Gorman then presented a video about a car sales exchange. He translated it in Navajo much like a silent film with a Navajo language voice over.

Darden heard testimonies about yoyo and bait and switch tactics, he explained in a phone interview.

Commissioners and staff members encourage people to provide the paperwork, which includes the auto contract, based on the testimony.

Darden said, "If people are willing to file a formal complaint against a specific dealership and bring forth witnesses, we'll follow with an investigation." He continued and said, "We can't file if there's no formal complaint."

The Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission received a number of requests to host more public hearings from Navajo citizens who want to share their experience of predatory auto sales tactics from border town auto dealers. **Public hearings** are in the process of being scheduled for **December 28, 2012** and **January 4, 2013**, at locations to be determined.

NNHRC advocates for the recognition of Navajo human rights and addresses discriminatory actions against the citizens of the Navajo Nation. For more information, call the NNHRC office at (928) 871-7436 or visit the NNHRC website at www.nnhrc.navajo-nsn.gov.

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